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# SWEDEN FROM THE INSIDE

BY PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWIŁŁ

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THE question of the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries, in general, and of Sweden in particular has once more come to the front, and this in rather an appalling manner thanks to the recent discoveries by the United States State Department of the use which the German Government has made of the Swedish Legation in Argentina and in Mexico for forwarding its messages, unknown to the Allies. For those who had watched with care all that went on in Sweden since the beginning of the war, these discoveries did not come with so much of a shock, for these people were very well aware of the strong pro-German proclivities of the Swedish Ministry, especially since the departure of the only reasonable element in the former Cabinet, Mr. Wallenberg, had left the field free for German sympathies to assert themselves. Though the Socialist and Liberal party headed by Mr. Branting were decidedly in favor of the Allies, yet the Government did not feel itself strong enough to renounce the traditional policy which had for its first principle the necessity to keep upon good terms with the Kaiser, his subjects and his ministers, whilst German agents and German money were more active in Scandinavia, and notably so in Sweden, than anywhere else in the world.

Germany understood but too well the immense advantages she possessed by keeping an open door to the Baltic and North Seas, which Sweden and Denmark could shut so easily, were they to join the ranks of her enemies, and consequently she spared no effort to cultivate good relations with these two countries as well as with Norway.

From the very beginning of the war she inundated Scandinavia with a whole army of spies and secret emissaries, who

possessed the art of appealing to the innate selfishness of all Scandinavians, as well as to their greed, mingled with an exaggerated fear of Russia. In Sweden especially, the latter feeling was not only encouraged, but artificially provoked. There does not exist in the whole world an individual more penetrated with the feeling of his own importance than the Swede, who believes quite sincerely that the eyes of the whole European Continent are turned upon him, and that his fatherland is one of the most important factors in the general political situation, as it has developed itself in consequence of the war. His vanity has made him believe quite sincerely that the one desire and aim of Russia is the conquest of Sweden, and when the present struggle began, one could meet at every street corner in Stockholm, men and women who related to you quite gravely, that an immense Russian army was already massed on the frontier of Finland, ready to invade the realm of the Bernadottes. It was useless to try and argue that point. The Swedes clung to it with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause, and one found plenty of people who seriously told you that one of the reasons why Germany had gone to war, had been the desire to prevent the premeditated aggression of Russia against its Swedish neighbor. Of course Teutonic agents and spies did their best to encourage these extravagant notions, and it is an undoubted fact, that ever since the outbreak of hostilities, Stockholm has been one of the most active centers of German intrigue against the Allies in Europe. They could give themselves free scope there, and flourish with an impunity which sometimes struck the onlooker as being one of the very remarkable symptoms of a situation, which was anything but neutral, in the literal sense of that word.

In fact Sweden has never been neutral, though its Government has tried to follow a policy of neutrality. But the army, the officers without exception, most of the aristocracy and Court officials, and members of the Royal Family headed by no less a person than the Queen of Sweden herself, were all distinctly and avowedly pro-German, and this to the extent of rendering the position of the Crown Princess, an Englishwoman by birth, cousin to King George, most difficult and complicated, notwithstanding the fact that she was perhaps the only person in the whole of Sweden who had remained really neutral, and who had had sufficient tact to refrain from expressing her private opinions in public. This

was more than could be said for the Queen, who brought to bear a certain affectation in her frankly pronounced affection for that beloved Germany from whence she hailed. The Queen's party, as it was called, was a strong one, and exercised a considerable influence in certain circles of society, where it was sought to discredit everything connected with the Allies, and with their policy. England in particular was represented as being the special enemy of Sweden, owing to the fact that she had stopped supplies, and put an embargo on the considerable contraband which was being carried on through the Scandinavian countries to Germany.

In regard to the latter fact, there is one consideration which must never be lost sight of, when attempting to come to a sound conclusion in regard to the conduct of the Scandinavian countries during the war, and this is the following one. When hostilities began, the first thought which entered the Swedish mind, was that of the possibility of making the situation turn to the advantage of Sweden from the commercial point of view. Stockholm became a vast stock exchange where everything under the sun was bought and sold pertaining to army needs and provisions. Regiments of shady speculators, who one and all called themselves commissionaires of governments that would never have dreamed of having anything to do with their more or less disreputable personalities, invaded the Swedish capital, where they proceeded to organize shareholders' societies and companies, under the pretext of trading honestly, and really occupied themselves with spying for the advantage of Germany, or with securing contraband for her benefit. They all of them had Swedish employees, and brought money into Sweden. This was more than sufficient to make Germany popular in the latter country, even if she had not been so for other reasons.

This golden age lasted for nearly two years, and then the evils engendered by the leniency of the Swedish Government in regard to these Teuton malefactors became apparent, and Sweden, through no fault of her own, found herself one day in the throes of a crisis such as she had never known before, in the whole course of her national history.

One does not export for months and months all one's food abroad, without coming to rue it in time, and Sweden was to discover to her detriment that her German sympathies had brought her very close to starvation, a starvation out of which, let us hope, she will emerge a reasonable being,

and understand at last that her real interest lies with the Allies, and not with the Kaiser, or his satellites and followers.

Here I must touch upon a point which I believe has never yet been sufficiently appreciated, or noticed, and that is the mistake committed by the Allies in thinking that Sweden was such a small and unimportant country, that it was not worth while spending money, or making efforts to win it over to their cause. A few millions, judiciously distributed, might at the outset have done more than anything else to convert the Swedes to common sense, if I may use this expression. By this I do not mean that anyone ought to have been bought over or corrupted, but merely that if the Scandinavian countries had been given more opportunities to trade exclusively with the Allied Powers, and had been granted more facilities for doing so, they would not have shown themselves so eager and ready to propitiate Germany, as has been the case. But the latter put so many opportunities in their way for enriching themselves, that it was but natural they should feel in sympathy with a nation which never hesitated in showing itself gracious towards them. This explains better than anything else why Germany became so popular in Sweden in particular, added to the fact that the latter came at last to believe quite seriously in the dark designs nursed by Russia in regard to her, a belief encouraged by the various political intrigues which Mr. Bethmann-Hollweg, through the intermediary of his numerous agents, perpetually entertained on Swedish soil.

Among them there is one which I cannot resist the temptation to relate here. When Russia proceeded to fortify the islands of Aland, a whole campaign was started in the Swedish press, to oblige, so to say, the Government to go to war on the subject. An interpellation was even made in the Swedish Riksdag by a certain General Rapp, an old man already in his dotage, but in possession of a good military reputation in the past, and popular among the army. When he gave way to a violent vituperation against Russia, people wondered what could have suddenly transformed the benevolent old man into such a fighting turkey cock, until at last it was discovered that the very text of his speech, as well as that of a pamphlet which he published about the same time, had been brought to him direct from Berlin, by a lady called Madame Moll, a Hungarian, who had been previously married to a Count Hoyos, and who had become

one of the most trusted political secret agents of the German Government. This lady had arrived in Stockholm with the precious documents hidden about her person, and of course with a diplomatic passport issued by the Wilhelmstrasse. She had made no secret of the reasons for her journey, and whilst its purport was well known, yet the Swedish Government seemed to ignore it, though this open attempt at corruption of a Swedish subject in his native land ought to have been instantly repressed if that Government had wished to remain neutral.

After Madame Moll, a certain Baron Oppeln, who, for the matter of that, may be still flourishing in Stockholm, went about quite freely, though it was well known that he was the head of the secret intelligence department which Berlin had organized in the Swedish capital, a department which exercised its functions without the least regard to the opinions of the public, and who affected a supreme contempt for Mrs. Grundy, represented by the Allied legations, and by their sympathizers. In fact Stockholm had become a dependency of Berlin in many ways, and the position of those who were not pro-German was anything but enviable there. They were looked upon as intriguers, and considered as spies, of course English spies, since England was really the only nation which was disliked, and to which were attributed the economical difficulties that were becoming more intense every day. Nearly the whole of the press was pro-German, and certain of the daily papers, such as the *Allhanda* and *Afton Blad* in the evening, and the *Stockholm Dagblad* and *Svenska Dagblad* in the morning, were openly subsidized by Germany, and made no secret of the fact. How all these things could be reconciled with the doctrine of neutrality remains a problem!

In regard to commercial matters, things were not much better. Sweden would not find herself at the present day in the presence of the many economical difficulties which confront her, had she remained neutral, as she pretended she was. But in the early days of the war, nearly every article imported into Sweden went over to Germany, and the meanest and most shameful tricks were resorted to in order to elude the conditions imposed by the Allies for the importation of raw products into all the Scandinavian countries. Firms of high repute gave every assurance required from them that the metals, cocoa or coffee sold to them would

either remain in Sweden, or else go to Russia, but they hastened to forget their promises as soon as they were put in possession of their goods, and forwarded them to Stettin or Lubeck with alacrity. Most amusing stories were related as to the manner in which this was done, and the tricks to which these unscrupulous people resorted to in order to give to the Kaiser the benefit of their acquisitions.

For instance, in more than one case, whole railway trucks on their way to Finland were suddenly shifted during the night, and found themselves at Trelleborg, or some other Swedish port on the Baltic, from whence they were dispatched to Germany. More than that, these people had confederates in Finland, who, in accord with the conditions imposed by the Allies, gave acknowledgments that the goods which had gone to Prussia or to Austria had been received by them, and consequently had reached Russia safely. Everybody knew that this was not true, but nothing could be done, and the only remedy left to the Allies was to put the firms that had been guilty of this breach of trust on the blacklist, which they hastened to do, but which after all was but a poor and platonic kind of satisfaction.

Then again, whole shipments destined bona fide for Scandinavia were sold to Germany secretly by quite another person than the one who had bought them, and the German Government advised of the day these ships would sail from an English port, together with the route which they were to follow. Of course the vessels were captured by a U-boat, and the man who had given the information cleared a round sum, which enabled him to begin again, on a larger scale, the speculation which had succeeded so well for him.

This kind of thing went on for something like two years, when at last Sweden, and together with her the rest of Scandinavia, found themselves faced by a most serious problem, that of finding sufficient food for their inhabitants. The scarcity of the most indispensable articles in the way of provisions became quite alarming, and by the end of the winter of 1916-17 one could find in Sweden neither butter, nor bread, nor sugar, nor coffee, and the price of everything else had risen to something like one hundred to one hundred and fifty per cent, in comparison with the preceding years. Coal was so scarce that it became a question how to furnish the electrical energy indispensable for the needs of the large towns and cities. Taxicabs came to an end, and gas was

transformed into a luxury. The poor population of Stockholm, Copenhagen and Christiania endured privations which were appalling in their intensity, and the Government was at last obliged to interfere, and to try to organize a system of providing for the needs of the country. The model selected was the one prevailing in Germany, but which was not accepted by any means with that resignation which is one of the distinctive features of the latter country.

It was then that a new anti-English and anti-Allies campaign was started, a campaign designed to make the latter responsible for all the disasters which were assailing Scandinavia. The Swedish Government was moved at last out of its usual apathy, but it was too late, and the ministry presided over by Mr. Hammerstein had to resign its functions under the shouts of execration of the whole population of Sweden, with the exception of those German fanatics who saw no salvation for them, or for the country, outside of Berlin. The new Administration was also pro-German, but it was compelled by public clamor to try and come to some kind of agreement with the people, whom it would have liked to betray in the secret of its soul, and it might have been brought to inaugurate an honest policy of neutrality if only the Allies had remained firm, and had insisted upon their conditions being accepted and fulfilled. The moment to do so would have been at the beginning of the German U-boat campaign, which at its debut aroused violent indignation in Sweden, and especially in Norway, whose shipping suffered the most, and whose sympathies have been more English than those of the two other Scandinavian countries. Unfortunately this moment was allowed to pass, and thanks to the perpetual German intrigues which flourished in Christiania, Copenhagen and Stockholm, public opinion is no longer so excited as was the case six months ago. The Swedish Government published long notes tending to prove that if Swedish imports had increased to an almost unheard of extent since the beginning of the war, this was simply owing to the fact that Sweden did not receive any longer the raw materials which Russia and Germany had given to her before the war, and that consequently she had to fall back for her personal consumption on what France, England and the United States could furnish her with; that consequently it was not to be wondered at if her importations from these countries reached abnormal proportions.



With regard to Russia, the assertion might have been true, but in regard to Germany, it was certainly not the case, because it is a fact well known to all those who have lived in Sweden during the war, that Germany has never refused to furnish her with any kind of raw materials she needed, and these were skilfully handed over to her, under the pretext of compensation for what she was giving in exchange. In view of this latter fact, it would be advisable if the Allies did not attach any importance, or at least not too much importance, to the official Swedish assertion that all the goods which Sweden is receiving now remain in the country, and are not re-exported to Germany.

It is here that the influence of America can come to play a prominent part in the situation, and to become its most powerful and strongest factor. Its refusal to continue playing the part of a dupe will do more to deprive the Kaiser of Scandinavian support than anything else in the world, and this policy of firmness will find many supporters in the Scandinavian countries themselves, because there, as well as everywhere else, a vast democratic movement is beginning to make itself felt, that might easily lead to the establishment of a Scandinavian confederation after the model of the United States.

It must not be forgotten that the strongest and the ablest men in Sweden, not to mention other countries, belong to the ranks of the democrats, who favor a republic. The only real statesman she can boast of is Mr. Branting, who is entirely won over to the cause of the Allies, and is the special object of the abomination of Germany, and it is he who is followed by the whole mass of the Swedish socialists. Were he ever to come to power, which is not an impossibility, in view of the fact that the next elections to the Swedish Riksdag will have been fought by the time this article is published, and will hang on the all important question of shortage of food, it is certain that Sweden would at last observe this neutrality which up to now she has constantly violated, in spite of the firm intention of its Sovereign to remain faithful to it, because King Gustav V is certainly sincere in his desire to keep outside the conflict. Unfortunately the Monarch is often debarred from doing what he would like, in that respect as well as in others. He has against him his wife, his surroundings, and in a certain sense his Government, because so far no Swedish ministry has really shown itself

neutral in the sense of not trying to make itself amiable in regard to Germans, who lord it in Stockholm just as much as they do in Berlin. The only thing which these Germans dread is the possibility of Mr. Branting becoming Prime Minister, because they are convinced that were this to happen, Sweden would immediately enter the ranks of their enemies. This last fear, however, is not justified, and I believe is only expressed in order to try to sap the popularity of the Socialist leader. Mr. Branting is far too shrewd a politician not to know that were the Scandinavian countries to join the conflict, no matter at whose side, this would mean for them the fate of Roumania in an aggravated form, whereas their "friendly neutrality," to use the expression dear to German hearts, might be of infinite advantage to the Allies, as well as to Scandinavia itself, because it would in the long run oblige it to follow the ways of democracy, and to work together with the rest of the world towards the establishment of a rational form of government.

We must never forget that in this war we are fighting for liberty and for justice against German oppression, and that none among the Allies pursues a selfish aim of conquest. This is the great and solemn truth, which we ought to make clear to Scandinavia as well as all the neutral countries, and we ought also to apply all our efforts to persuade them, that the only way in which they can hope to derive some benefit from the difficulties of the present situation, is in working together with us towards the establishment of a permanent peace in the world. This they can only do by showing themselves really neutral, not by continuing to supply our enemies with the means to go on with the struggle, as they have been doing up to the present day.

CATHERINE RADZIWILL.